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THE CREATIVE EXPERIENCE

WILLIAM ADAMS BROWN, D.D.

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The Creative Experience

THE CREATIVE EXPERIENCE

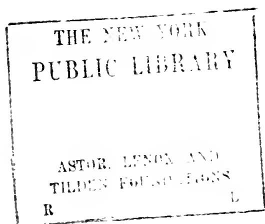
AN INTIMATION OF IMMORTALITY

The Drew Lecture for 1922

BY

WILLIAM ADAMS BROWN, Ph.D., D.D.

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
NEW YORK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The Revival of Interest in Immortality

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I. The Revival of Interest in Immortality

EIGHT years ago it was my privilege to stand in this place and deliver the Drew Lecture. How much has happened since that time. We were in the first months of the Great War, and in the new strange world in which we found ourselves were feeling our way towards some stable moral foundation upon which our faith could rest. At a time so incredibly chaotic the fate of the individual seemed to matter little. Even personal immortality became for the moment a thing of secondary importance. There was a major question which claimed our attention, the question of the existence and of the government of God. Had the world cut loose from its moral moorings, or was it still—in spite of all appearances to the contrary—under divine control? This was the question to which I invited

your attention as I asked you to consider the workings of *God in History*.[1]

The situation in which we find ourselves to-day is different. The war has come and gone, leaving us as its aftermath a harvest of disappointment and disillusionment. The military victory for which we longed has been won, but the results which were confidently predicted to follow it have failed to materialise. The great sacrifices so freely, so magnificently given have yielded no corresponding fruits in individual or social salvation. On the contrary, there has been a moral set-back evidencing itself in discouraging lapses in the most unexpected quarters. Under the new conditions the old questions—for the moment postponed or forgotten—reassert their claims on our attention. The place and significance of the individual in the social order becomes again a problem pressing for solution.

I welcome the opportunity, therefore, to

[1] *Is Christianity Practicable?* Chapter II. New York, 1916.

supplement the discussion of my previous lecture by a fresh consideration of the subject of personal immortality. On this at least we are all agreed, that our great need to-day is of a revival of personal religion. We need men and women who take themselves seriously and regard their own individual lives as a trust held for God. Belief in immortality is the form in which the consciousness of the value of the individual personality finds its most striking expression. I propose, therefore, to raise again the ancient question, "If a man die, shall he live again?"

One personal word I may permit myself before we plunge into our theme. We miss to-night a face which was with us eight years ago. When I first stood on this platform it was my privilege to be introduced by Dr. Forsyth—the honoured Principal of Hackney College. To-day he has joined the company of the immortals. As we think of the creative experience as an intimation of immortality, we cannot but recall that magnetic presence. Many

an argument may be given for belief in immortality; but when all is said there is none which carries so much weight as contact with a spirit that lives in the consciousness of the eternal.

I am to speak of the creative experience as an intimation of immortality. It might seem as if everything that could be said on the subject of immortality had already been said. No logical possibility but has already been explored by acute intellects, no favouring or, for that matter, no unfavourable consideration, but has been duly weighed and catalogued. But man is not only a creature of logic. "The heart has its reasons which the reason knows not of," and side by side with the story of the *argument* for belief in immortality, there is another history—no less instructive—the history of men's *attitude* to the question of life after death—the extent to which it has laid hold upon their imagination, and affected their conduct—in a word, the psychology, as distinct from the logic of their belief.

We are coming to realise more clearly than we once did the importance of this distinction. We perceive that the *arguments* which we give to justify our beliefs are often very different from the *reasons* which lead us to believe. These have their roots in the subsoil of our nature—in our habits, our inclinations, our likes and our dislikes—in a word, the whole realm of sentiment and appreciation in which so much of our life is lived. We shall not understand what belief in immortality means for human life until we leave the text-books of the schools and watch this belief working out its fruits in the lives of those who hold it.

When we follow this method we are struck with one outstanding and significant fact—the great change in the emotional attitude toward the belief in immortality which has taken place in the lifetime of our generation. A half-century ago the immortality of the soul was not only one of the beliefs which was most unquestioningly accepted; it was also one of the beliefs which held the largest place in

man's emotional life. The other world—toward which he was steadily moving—was something real and near. It affected his conduct. It entered into his calculations. It was the dwelling-place of the dear ones gone before. It was the home to which his own steps were inevitably bringing him; it was the testing-place where the issues of life were to be tried, and irrevocable judgments passed upon the deeds which had been done here.

No doubt there were great differences in the way in which this life was conceived in detail. To simple Christians of the evangelical tradition, heaven was the place where the redeemed soul met Christ the Saviour face to face, and entered into the joys prepared for the saints; joys all the more precious because of the vivid sense of the perils and torments from which His atoning death had delivered them. To those who had broken with supernatural religion the life after death was still the inevitable consummation of the life lived here, the place where justice equalised the inequalities

of this present life under inexorable law. But in each case it was something intensely realised—a fact to be taken account of, a motive to influence conduct—a great hope or a great fear.

But to-day for multitudes of men this is no longer the case. It is not that the life after death is denied, but it is not intensely believed. The centre of interest has shifted. Not in heaven by and by but here in this life are the great hopes to be realised, the great values to be achieved. What may be before us in the future, the future will reveal. But the present is ours, to be used and to be enjoyed.

I have elsewhere discussed the reasons for this shifting of interest,[1] and will not repeat the discussion here. Many different causes have co-operated to bring about the result. The breaking down of older views of authority, which forces us to look to immediate experience for our certainty; the new social interest, which discredits

[1] *The Christian Hope: a Study in the Doctrine of Immortality.* London, 1912.

the older individualistic religion; the revival of a pantheistic philosophy, which substitutes a mystical for an ethical doctrine of salvation: these are but a few of many influences which have combined to bring about the change of which we have been speaking, and have put the apologist for immortality in an unprecedented situation.

Yet there are signs that the situation is again changing. From many different quarters we have indications of a renewed interest in the subject of personal immortality. The rapid spread of spiritualism is one of these signs. When men like William James and Sir Oliver Lodge think it worth while to give their time to a study of the arguments which profess to demonstrate the continuity of personal existence after death, it is an indication that the subject deserves our serious attention. Men have had time to test the value of the proposed substitutes for personal immortality, and they have found them less satisfying than they had expected.

They are beginning again to ask themselves whether death ends all, or whether there is some other region of life in which our hopes of a larger and more generous existence may find their fulfilment.

Here as in so many other realms of experience the war has been a great revealer. It dissipated our hope of an early and easy coming of the Kingdom of God on earth. It revealed to us anew the radical evil of human nature; the inevitable penalty of national selfishness when practised on a colossal scale. It brought us face to face with the elemental realities with which the prophets of every age have dealt. It has made immortality again a subject of living and present interest.

If there were no other reasons, the fearful loss of human life would have forced the question upon our attention. In normal times men slip off one by one, and the natural expectation of each man is that he will live his appointed time. Room is given in the traditional threescore years and ten for the gratification of

the normal hopes of the normal man. The tragedy of early death is dismissed as exceptional, and passed over lightly by the majority. But all this was changed by the war. For the first time in the memory of many men now living, on a colossal scale men faced death as a present fact—coming to them in the bloom of their youth. For country, for home, for civilisation they were asked to lay down their lives; and the question forced itself upon them, "To what end? Is this that I now do the last thing that I shall ever do, or is this death of mine, as so many have believed in the past, only the opening of the door into a larger life—a life in which I may share the values I have helped to create?"

The great majority of those who faced this question gave the latter answer. They refused to believe that death ended all. They confidently expected that they would live on after death. Of all the subjects on which the war gave us clear evidence, none was clearer than the extent and the unquestioning character of the

young man's belief in immortality. That fading of interest of which I have spoken was, it would appear, only temporary. Beneath the apparent indifference, the old instinct for continuance was still alive in men.

For belief in immortality has never stood alone. Always it has been part of a larger philosophy of life. By what a man thinks of himself you may know what he thinks of God and of his fellows. If men have believed in a life after death, it was because they believed in life—a life so excellent that it deserved to last for ever; if they believed that such a life was a fact, it was because they were convinced that the world was so made that the eternal values would be preserved; because they had faith that a righteous God was in control.

If, then, we are to recover again a confident belief in immortality, we must begin with re-establishing faith in the value of the individual who is to live on after death. We must show that there is some-

thing in man which deserves to last; something which, unlike the changing creatures of chance and time, has in it the marks of permanence. Such evidence we may find in man's experience of creation; the fact that he, alone of all living things, conceives enduring ideals and embodies them in forms that outlive himself. I invite you, therefore, to-day to consider with me the creative experience as an intimation of immortality.

The Creative Experience

II. The Creative Experience

One of the outstanding characteristics of man is that he is always making something. This habit, to be sure, is not peculiar to man. Other animals also are makers. Birds build their nests; beavers construct their dams; bees build hives, where they make and store their honey. But there is one marked difference between man and the other animals, that the things which they make conform to a standard type, while his creations vary with the individual and the age. The structures erected by bird and bee may show great adaptation to the purpose for which they are designed. They may suggest, as they have indeed long suggested, intelligence at work. But the intelligence is something implanted in the maker at his birth as part of the common endowment of his kind. It is

instinctive rather than deliberate; it repeats rather than initiates. What the bird does to-day his ancestors have done for generations. The group as a whole is little further on than it was a century or a millennium ago. There is construction—often highly skilful and complicated—but so far as we can see, neither individual self-expression nor social progress.

With man it is otherwise. He not only makes things, he makes new things. He not only imitates; he experiments. He not only repeats; he initiates. And this faculty of shaping old materials to new uses we call creation.

It will be worth our while to consider with some care this creative experience. It has become so familiar to us that we fail to appreciate it in its prophetic and revolutionary significance.

By creation, as we shall understand it in what follows, we shall mean the faculty which man possesses of expressing his personality in constructions which have permanence and meaning; constructions

which act as means of communication with other men; give pleasure; serve uses; form a bond of sympathy and communion; are the source of new creative activity in others.

Such creations may be of the most various kinds. They may be material things like buildings or clothes; they may be impalpable to the senses, like character or ideals. They may be designed to give pleasure, like pictures or statues; or to convey instruction, like books. They may combine all of these qualities in social entities like institutions, but whatever they may be like in detail, they possess certain qualities which it will be our duty to consider attentively; for upon our grasp of their significance will depend our ability to understand the creative experience.

In the first place, that which is produced by the creative experience is always a whole. It may be composed of the most diverse materials—materials which at first sight have nothing in common, but when

assembled by their maker and shaped to his uses, they disclose an inner unity. They lend themselves to the new purpose to which they are put; fit each into its place as part of the completed structure; lose their original identity, and become component parts of a more complex and yet consistent unit. When you look at them you think no longer of them, but of the new object of which they have become component and integral parts.

Again, the product of the creative experience possesses meaning. It is a sign. It becomes a medium of communication, revealing to the discerning observer the mind and heart of its maker. This self-revealing quality is indeed the distinctive mark of the creative experience. Where it is absent you may have every evidence of industry and perseverance. You miss the indefinable something which makes us say, when we contemplate the best human construction, "Here a *mind* has been at work."

And with unity and meaning goes also

originality. By this I do not mean, of course, that creation involves an abrupt break with the past. If this were true, it would be impossible to fit it in with the existing order. Creation, like the personality of which it is the expression, is subject to law, and achieves its effect of novelty by shaping old elements to new uses. What is meant is, that that which is expressed in the new creation has a certain individual quality, and is, in some respects at least, different from what has gone before. That difference may be only in the subjective sphere—a new appreciation, a new sympathy; or it may be a difference of reference or of relation—a new contact, a new adaptation. But in each case it speaks of a fresh insight or a new purpose. The creator has seen something for himself; or it may be he has felt something for himself, and that new insight, that vivid emotion, he has managed to impress upon what he has made, so that it becomes a source of new insight or new emotion in others.

One more quality of the creative experience needs to be noted—for our purpose in some respects the most significant and instructive of all; and that is permanence. The thing that has been made *lasts*, and it continues, through all the changes of outward and inward environment, to exhibit the characteristics and to exercise the influence which we have described.

It is true that this quality of permanence manifests itself in very varying degrees, according to the nature of the medium which is employed. In some arts, such as that of oratory, the effect produced is fleeting, because the medium is such that the impression cannot be completely repeated, apart from the presence of the speaker. But in most of the arts, in literature, in sculpture, in painting and in architecture, permanence is universally admitted to be the test of greatness. What we call a classic is an example of creative activity which has proved its vitality by remaining alive through the centuries. Each time we see it, it discloses some new

beauty, strikes some new chord, makes us more than ever conscious that life is touching life, that personality is speaking to personality. The power to bring into existence that which has this self-perpetuating quality is what we here mean by the creative experience. It is the process by which we are able to make our best moments live after us.

I have said that this experience manifests itself in many different ways. Most of the illustrations which I have thus far used have been taken from the field of the arts. For it is in the works of the great artists, whether with word or brush, that we find our most signal examples of the creative power. But creation, in the sense in which we are thinking of it, is a much more common and familiar thing. It is found wherever man makes anything which expresses his personality, and enlarges the range of his self-expression. A home-maker expresses herself through the home; a man of business through his business. In each sphere of self-expression we may find

the combination of qualities which I have described — unity, meaning, originality, permanence. To be sure, they are not present to the same degree. Some people seem to be mere imitators, doing over again what has been done before them; others appear to be mere collectors, bringing together whatever may strike their fancy, without any inner unity or symmetry. Yet in the measure that any man or woman achieves that indefinable thing we call personality, he becomes a creator, a maker of that which has a self-revealing quality, a projector of his insights across the bars of space and time, so that they have the power to touch and to inspire even those who have never seen him in the flesh.

But we must examine this mysterious power somewhat more in detail, for upon our ability to appreciate it will depend our apprehension of the force of the argument for individual immortality.

In its most familiar form, as it meets us in our everyday experience, creation has to do with things, physical objects in the

material universe. Man makes houses, or engines, or pictures. He writes books, he carves statues. Each of these may be a whole in itself, telling its own story, displaying the qualities we have already analysed. But these individual objects may be themselves combined in larger units which reveal the same characteristics on a more generous scale. A home is more than a house and all the objects in it. It is a work of art, in which each particular thing, however beautiful or useful in itself, loses its own identity in a larger whole; or rather, I should say, acquires new beauties through the new context in which it is set. A home is not a museum, to which one goes to see examples of each thing after its kind, like the animals entering the ark. A home is the expression of the ideals and activities of a group of persons, who in the exercise of their creative power have become an example of that extraordinary work of art we call the family.

With the mention of ideals we have passed from the outward aspect of crea-

tion, which concerns itself with the raw material of expression, to the inner aspect, which has to do with the thing to be expressed. What is an ideal? It is a standard by which the mind regulates its activities; not only its outward activities in moulding material objects, but its inward activities in aspiration and will. An ideal is a picture of the spirit, which shows me what I ought to desire. It is the model after which I fashion the outward objects which my hand makes, by which also I fashion that inward object which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, which I call my character. To live according to my ideals is to know in supreme measure the joy of creation. For joy is the subjective counterpart of harmony. As Bergson has reminded us, in distinction from mere pleasure, it is the sign of the triumph of life. "Where joy is, creation has been, and the richer the creation the higher the joy." It is so of the mother with her child, of the artist with his picture, of the scientist with his discovery.

"If then," Bergson goes on, "in every province the triumph of life is expressed by creation, ought we not to think that the ultimate reason of human life is a creation which, in distinction from that of the artist or the man of science, can be pursued every moment and by all men alike? I mean, the creation of self by self, the continual enrichment of personality by elements, which it does not draw from outside, but causes to spring up from itself."[1]

Thus far we have been speaking of the work of the individual man, whether in the outward or the inward sphere; in the making of beautiful things, or in the formation of a noble character. But creation is not simply an individual but a social experience. We not only make things; we make them together. Indeed the finer the things we make the more clearly we perceive that without help from others we must fail.

The family—in the sense in which we

[1] *Hibbert Journal,* October 1911, p. 42.

have become familiar with it in Christianity —is a signal example of social creation. It is a combination of characters who have renounced each some part of his own freedom or individuality in order to contribute to a larger whole, and in the process have developed new and unsuspected values within themselves. So described the family is a type of a whole group of social units—the school, the club, the State, the Church. These are all of them examples of social creation.

Take, for example, the school. Using that word as a comprehensive term to describe the entire group of institutions which are devoted to the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge, what more instructive example could we find of co-operative creative activity? Modern science exhibits in extraordinary degree the qualities which we have associated with the creative experience. Out of parts it is ever seeking to construct wholes which have inner structure and meaning. It is

never satisfied with the old, but is always pressing on to some new combination or formula. Yet the test by which the scientist judges success, the goal after which he is ever striving, is permanence. He hopes to discover a formula which need not be revised, a generalisation under which each new individual example can find its appropriate place.

This goal is, of course, beyond the reach of any individual. Only through the combined effort of many can it be reached. Each new student must make his own the work of his predecessors, passing it through the fire of his own personality, to return it purged and purified and renewed, the raw material in its turn of still other experiments, the spring of fresh creative power in other men.

Religion, too, presents us with striking illustrations of the creative experience. Religion is the renewal of life through contact with the unseen. Its characteristic expression is worship, the upward look

to that which is greater and more noble than ourselves. Its goal is character, a willing conformity of the spirit to the highest ideals. In pursuit of this goal men are continually discarding the old for the new—blazing fresh trails—aspiring after new conquests. Yet here, again, the goal is permanence—a rest that remaineth—a peace that passeth understanding. This rest in restlessness—this restlessness in rest—is the paradox of the religious experience.

In religion, as in science, creation is a social experience. The spirit is not isolated in its quest. We are to look not on our own things, but also on the things of others. The solitary experience of the mystic is not the final word of religion. It is a preparation for citizenship in the Kingdom of God. The Apostle Paul knew what it meant to speak to God face to face. Yet, describing his faith in the unseen future toward which he was moving, he summed up his picture of heaven in this revealing

sentence : " For what is our hope or joy or crown of glory? Are not even ye before Our Lord Jesus? For ye are our glory and our joy." The creation of self to which his life was given, the enrichment of personality in which he found his joy, was not that of his own character, but of his spiritual children, for whose sake he was willing himself to be cast away.

In this significant example of social creation we see the union of two motives which have ever been active in the creative experience—the joy of self-expression as it meets us in the artist, the passion of service as it shows itself in the saint.

Characteristic of creation in all its forms, as we have seen, is the desire to express some insight or meaning. The creator has seen something, or felt something which he wishes to preserve. He catches some vision of beauty, and before it fades he longs to reproduce it in some permanent form so that it will never escape him. He has conceived a principle which can be made

to serve human uses, and he wishes to test the correctness of his idea by constructing some machine which will put the principle to the proof.

I have called this desire to perpetuate our best self-expression, and it is a true description. But of itself it is not adequate. This self which we desire to perpetuate is itself something which we discover. Bergson speaks of the creation of self by self; the enrichment of personality by that which is within; but when we turn within we do not escape God. This self which I am always making I am not making alone. Indeed it is as true to say that it is always being made for me. What I design I have first discovered. What I create has been first created in me. Indeed it is the mark of the greatest men that they are the most humble. They are transmitters, at most transformers. "What have we," they say with the Apostle, "that we have not first received?"

Yet in the very act of reception there is

a transformation. The thing seen becomes different because they have seen it, and that difference—the source of ever new differences in others—is at once the mark and the measure of the creative experience.

Self-expression, then, is only one form of the revelation of that which is other and greater than self. But self-expression is never the whole of the creative experience. With the desire to preserve goes also the desire to share. What I have received, I have received not for myself but for others; that they may see what I have seen, and feel what I have felt, and seeing and feeling what I have seen and felt, may see what I can never see and feel what I have never felt.

The social aspect of creation finds its illustration, but at the same time its limitation, in the social form which we call the institution. The institution is to society what the body is to the individual person, the organ through which the inner life of the spirit finds outward expression.

It is the means by which men can act together for common purposes and over long periods of time. It perpetuates the insight and ideals of the past, and so becomes the parent of new insights and new ideals in the future. But it perpetuates them in forms which the past has prescribed, which with the passage of years become increasingly unintelligible. Thus that which was designed as a contribution to progress may easily become its foe; and by perpetuating forms which to the new generation no longer convey meanings, hamper the spirit in its quest for truth. In great crises it may even make the price of progress a complete break with the past. But such a break has its dangers, as the experiences of the last few years have shown. In society, as in the individual, creation is never *ex nihilo*. Always it uses the old to promote the new. Always the test that the new means real progress is that it enhances the value of the old. The perennial problem of government is to

discover the way in which the institutions of society may be used to conserve the gains of the past without limiting the future. This, too, is the sphere of the creative experience—at once its most difficult and its most rewarding.

An Intimation of Immortality

III. An Intimation of Immortality

It may seem as if our discussion had carried us far afield. What, it may well be asked, has the creative experience to do with the subject of personal immortality? The answer is that it increases our understanding of the person who is a candidate for immortality, and so makes us better able to judge whether the claim which has been put forth on his behalf is worthy of serious consideration.

When we analyse the arguments which have been adduced against the belief in personal immortality, we find that they are of three main kinds. It is maintained—(1) that the life which the individual lives here is not significant enough to warrant its continuance after death. It is argued—(2) that even if it seemed to us sufficiently significant, there is no reason to believe

that the universe is so constructed as to conform to our human standard of values. It is contended—(3) finally, that the conscious life of man which we associate with the spirit is so dependent upon man's physical organism, that with the dissolution of the body, consciousness must cease. We may call the first the ethical, the second the philosophical, the third the scientific argument against immortality.

The line of reasoning upon which we have been engaged contributes nothing directly to the answer to the third of these arguments. The whole question of the relation of mind and body and of the dependence of the former upon the latter is one which is under careful investigation by science, and we must await the result of these investigations before reaching a conclusion. The most that we need to say here is, that while the results of study up to date have yielded no positive results, they have equally failed to prove the negative. We know that consciousness as we possess it to-day is dependent upon the

functioning of a mass of matter which we call the brain, and that when this is injured, serious derangement, and even cessation of our mental processes, is the result. But we have no means of knowing that there are not other conditions under which consciousness may function, or that the change to a new form of life must necessarily break the continuity of consciousness we call personality. Science cannot prove that we are immortal. It is equally impotent to disprove it. When authorities as eminent as Sir William Osler and William James agree in this conclusion, we may at least console ourselves with the knowledge that there is no reason for denying the ethical and philosophical arguments their full weight.

I am aware that there are some who believe that science can do more than this. For them possibility has already passed into proof, and in the seances of psychical research they believe that they have received convincing evidence of personal immortality. I would not deny them the

comfort of their assurance. But for myself I am not persuaded that the proof is really adequate. It may be that science will some day demonstrate personal immortality. It is enough for me that it leaves the way open for the other arguments which make faith in it reasonable.

These other arguments are, as we have seen, in part ethical, in part philosophical. In part they consist in showing that individual personality is so valuable and significant that it deserves to survive; in part in showing that the universe as a whole is such that it is reasonable to believe that our highest values will be conserved.

Here the practical considerations with which we began our lecture begin to operate. So long as it is generally agreed that human personality is a precious and unique thing, that life, as man lives it here, is rich with possibilities which cannot be realised in the space of earthly existence, it is reasonable to believe in a life after death, provided that the universe as a whole moves on

moral lines and that we can justify our faith in the control of a good God. If, however, the major premise is challenged, the conclusion is invalidated from the start. If there is nothing worth conserving, it is idle to ask what grounds we have to hope for conservation.

I am aware that this statement covers only one form of the moral argument against personal immortality. Those who deny immortality do not all do so because they depreciate the value of the individual. Some base their denial upon their belief that the present life affords scope for the fullest development of the greatest individual. What is often called social immortality, the doctrine that men live on in other lives, even when individual consciousness has ceased, may be consistent with a very high sense of the value of the individual. One may hold that each human personality has a place in the plan of God, and that His purpose cannot be consummated except as each contributes his own special gift to the life of the

whole. The point insisted on is that this contribution can be made adequately within the span of this earthly life, and that the self-perpetuation to which every virile spirit looks forward can take place without the continuance of individual self-consciousness.

At this point our study of the creative experience makes its contribution to the argument. If, indeed, each individual were a self-enclosed unit capable of so much exertion and no more, this might be the case. One would live his life, do his bit, and having done it fall asleep, content in the assurance that the influences set in motion would go on operating on other lives as long as human life lasts. But if we have correctly described the facts, man is much more than this. The capacity to create which is the distinguishing mark of man has no set limits. It comes and goes, grows and diminishes, is stimulated by new contacts, reborn in new environments. With some men it makes its appearance late in life, in some it seems at its apex

when death comes. The mark of the creative personality as distinguished from other persons is just this, that you can never set limits to its capacity. Much as it achieves, you are conscious of powers still unused, contributions still unmade. It is not because death robs us of what has *already* been done that we desire immortality for our great ones. It is because it prevents us from enjoying what they might *still* do were life spared to them.

And what is true of the great spirits, to whom no one would deny creative power, is true in a lesser, but no less unmistakable way, of many from whom this great gift has apparently been withheld. How many lives there are in which we are conscious of powers still unused, capacities still undeveloped! Quite apart from the young who are taken from us with the promise of their lives unfulfilled, there are older people who seem to be just discovering the secret of life when the time comes to end it. "Si jeunesse savait, si vieillesse pouvait." "If the young only knew, if the

old only could." It is the cry of each passing generation. Granted that the man I have been is not worth preserving; the man I am becoming is conscious of stirrings of creative power which, if this life be all, can never be exercised.

To the first of the great arguments for immortality, then, our study has a definite contribution to make. This mysterious power which we call creation is man's chief reason for desiring to live on after death; the chief ground for believing that if the world is so constituted as to conserve our highest values, this desire will find fulfilment.

But the question still remains: Is the world such a world? Granting that man has capacities which are worth conserving, is there any reason for believing that the universe is so constructed as to conserve our highest values?

It is not my purpose here to enter upon a discussion of this world-old question. It lies at the heart of all philosophic thought; and upon the answer which we

give to it will depend our ability to maintain the religious view of life. Religion —at least religion in its higher forms— assumes correspondence between reality and value. It takes for granted a Power who controls the universe for moral ends, and founds its belief in personal immortality upon a deeper and more fundamental faith in God. The arguments by which this faith is defended are familiar, and I do not propose to repeat them here. I shall content myself with calling attention to a single point at which the line of reasoning we have been following reinforces the argument for theism.

The chief argument against the theistic view of the universe has always been the universal sway of natural law. In a world where effect follows cause in inexorable sequence, there seems no room for the personal initiative which we associate with God.

But in the creative experience at least we see personal initiative at work. Here, at least, the creative exercise of mind is an

indispensable factor in the production of the result achieved. If—in the case of man—a creative experience is possible in a world of law, then there is no reason why on a larger scale mind should not be operative in the production of the changes which lend meaning and beauty to our world. That such is the case theistic religion has always maintained.

But if we are right in thinking that God is a creator, then we should expect to find His work exhibiting the characteristics of the creative experience, as we find it in other realms—wholeness, meaning, originality, permanence. And nowhere are these qualities more signally illustrated than in man. Nowhere is individuality carried farther than in man, and nowhere else does this individuality express itself through more significant and comprehensive meanings. To no other exhibition of God's creative power can we so confidently attribute permanence.

On the face of it the facts seem to contradict this expectation. The works of

man live on indefinitely and work in their appropriate way. But this greatest work of God—the creative experience itself—is restricted to threescore years and ten. Why in a world in which old elements are ever being combined into new forms is it not reasonable to believe that God will provide some new vehicle through which the spirit, which has all its life been practising the creative art, will be able to bring its slowly acquired powers to full expression?

We have reached the end of our journey. What we have attempted is not a complete argument for immortality, but simply one restricted part of it, namely, that afforded by our study of the creative experience. It remains only to point out one or two practical consequences which follow.

First of all, this enhanced sense of man's value will help us to face with more courage and hope the social crisis which confronts us. We need to-day to revive the world's lost faith in the possibility of social creation. The institutions under which we have been living have broken

down under the strain. More than ever we realise our dependence upon one another. More than ever we distrust the agencies through which our common life is being lived. New creation, in State and in Church, is the crying need of the day. But creation in society depends upon the presence of creative personalities—men and women with a long look, who are shaping their lives by inner principles, and are willing to wait. To such nobler and more heroic living faith in personal immortality contributes. If I shall live after death and am working for men and women who are to live after death, I can afford to be patient, to take the time that is needed to study all sides of the question, to wait till I see clearly what needs to be done and how to do it.

I can afford to be patient, but I dare also to be brave. When once I see what is right in the light of the long look, I can act without fear; for what is incomplete here may be finished to-morrow, and

apparent failure prove but a stepping-stone to complete success.

This resolute disregard of immediate success, this willingness to take risks for the longer future, is the indispensable condition of social progress. It is not only the condition of leadership, it is the way to make comrades who deserve good leadership, and are willing to follow it when it is offered. I have spoken of the creative experience as common to men. Yet how many there are who seem to have little of the divine initiative; lives which, if measured by what we see here, contribute little or nothing to their fellows, and would not be greatly missed were they to drop out altogether. For this difficulty immortality in itself affords no solution. But it leaves scope for a wider experience in which the solution may be found. It may be the right contact has not been made; it may be the right stimulus has not been applied; it need not mean that the capacity is not there. Here and now pro-

saic lives are constantly surprising us by new discoveries. How many such disclosures await us in the life after death we cannot yet know. How many may reward us even here, if we have faith to expect them, the future must reveal. More than anything else, we need to-day men who believe in the undiscovered possibilities in men —not in the exceptional man merely, but in the plain people who make up the bulk of mankind, and upon whose capacity to respond to the appeal of comradeship in helpfulness the future of the race depends. Belief in man's immortal destiny makes such faith easier.

In this faith we must address ourselves to the present task. There are great things to be done, too great to be finished in the lifetime of any individual. Social institutions must be remade; new forms created in State and Church. An international consciousness must be born and provided with its appropriate organs of expression. For this creative activity is needed, and cooperation on a larger and more unselfish

scale than the world has yet seen. To this fascinating and beneficent activity you and I are called. And we shall be sustained in the discipline it requires by the assurance that, though we can see only the beginnings here, there is a larger life awaiting us in the future, and that in this larger life every thwarted power may find full exercise and the solutions which have been denied us here may be revealed.